



**Didier Reynders**  
**Belgium ( Renew Europe)**

**Background**

Didier Reynders is a seasoned Belgian politician with both a strong national and international reputation. Always loyal to the liberal party, Didier Reynders has had a ministerial post in each consecutive federal government since 12 July 1999, until his recent appointment as Commissioner.

Born in 1958 in Liège, Didier Reynders graduated in Law at the university of Liège. In 1989, Reynders started his professional career as a lawyer. Between 1985 and 1988 Didier Reynders was the Director General of the department Local Governments of the Walloon Regional administration. In 1986, at the age of 28, he was appointed chairman of the National Railway Company, a position he held until 1991. From 1991 until 1993 Reynders was chairman of the National Airway Company (predecessor of Brussels Airport).

Mr Reynders' political career started in 1988, when at the age of 30 he was elected city councillor in his hometown Liège for the liberal party PRL (predecessor of the French-speaking liberal party MR – *Mouvement Réformateur*). 1993 embarks the start of Reynders' national political breakthrough, with his first election for the Belgian federal parliament. From 1995 until 1999 Mr Reynders was the PRL whip leader within the federal parliament.

In 1999, Reynders became member of the federal government as Federal Minister for Finance, a position he held until 2011. Ever since he held his first ministerial post, Mr Reynders has been awarded by a ministerial post in every consecutive government. Other portfolios for which Reynders was responsible include Direction of the Buildings (2003 – 2011), Institutional Reforms (2004 – 2011), National Lottery and the Federal Participation- and Investment Enterprise (FPIM) and Insurance companies (2007 – 2011), Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and European Affairs (2011 – 2014) and Defence

(2018). Over this period, he was Vice Prime Minister in 2004, as well as during the last legislature of 2014-2018, within government Michel I.

Other important positions that were held by Mr. Reynders during his time as a Belgian federal minister include his chairmanship of the Eurogroup in 2001, his chairmanship of Ecofin for six months in 2001 and 6 months in 2010, his membership of the G7 in 2001 and his chairmanship of the G10 in 2002.

Also within his party, Reynders held important positions, such as party vice-president (1992 – 2004), as well as the party's president (2004 – 2011).

### Personal insights and style of governing

Didier Reynders is the youngest of three children, born in 1988 in Liège. He is married and is the father of 4 children. It is only in 2012 that Reynders changed Liège for the Brussels Capital Region.

Because of his long career as minister, Mr Reynders is known as one of the dinosaurs of Belgian politics. He has a hard style of governing and has been praised for his ability to assess and understand often complex political dossiers. He is also perceived as someone with a strong will, wanting to follow his own line and who is not easily influenced. Further, Didier Reynders is also known for his influential network, which he developed throughout his career by, among others, assigning cabinet advisors and head of cabinets to key posts within the administration, diplomatic posts and boards of directors.

In the beginning of 2019, Didier Reynders was disappointed after not being elected the new secretary general of the Council of Europe. Reynders got 105 votes, compared to the 159 votes in favour of the Croatian Buric.

After the 2019 federal elections, Didier Reynders was asked by King Filip, in regard to the formation of a new federal government, to take the role of one of the two *informateurs*. Reynders accepted the role, which meant he was responsible to look for the challenges, opportunities and conditions in order to form the new federal government.

### Education

Graduated with a Master's Degree in Law from the University of Liège

### Academic positions

Student-assistent with Professor François Perin – Faculty of Law at the university of Liège (1979-1982)

Lecturer / Guest Lecturer at the Hautes Etudes commerciales de Liège (1989-2004)

Guest Lecturer - HEC Management School at the University of Liège (2005-2017)

Guest Lecturer at the Louvain School of Management - Université catholique de Louvain (2007 – until now)

Lecturer at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (2017 – until now)

### General Work Experience

Worked as a lawyer (1981-1985)

Director-general of the department Local Governments at the Ministry of the Walloon Regional Government (1985-1988)

Chairman of the National Society of the Belgian Railways (1986-1991)

Chairman of the national Society of Airways (1991-1993)

### Political Activities

Head of cabinet of the Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Justice and Institutional Reform Jean Gol (1987-1988)

Member of the municipal council in Liège (1988-2012)

MR whip leader in the municipal council for the city of Liège (1995-2012)

Vice-president of MR (1992-2004)

Member of the Chamber of Representatives since 1992

President of the group PRL-FDF in the Chamber of Representatives (1995-1999)

President of the provincial federation of Liège of the MR (1995 - 2004)

President of the Liège department of MR (1995-2004)

Member of the bureau and vice-president of the Liberale Internationale (2005-2011)

President of MR (2004-2011)

Member of the municipal council and MR whip leader in the municipal council of Uccle (from 3 december 2012 until the end of 2018)

President of the Brussels department of MR (since 12 January 2013)

### Government positions

Minister of Finance (1999-2011)

President of the Eurogroup (January - December 2001)

President of Ecofin (July - December 2001 / July 2010 - December 2010)

Member of the G7 in 2001

President of the G10, group of the most important creditors, 2002

Minister charged with the Management of the real estate (2003-2011)

Vice-Prime Minister since 18 July 2004

Minister of Institutional Reforms (2004-2011)

Minister charged with the National Lottery and with the Federal Participation and Investment society (FPIM) and the insurance companies (2007-2011)

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and European Affairs (2011-2014)

Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, charged with Beliris and the Federal Cultural Institutions since 11 October 2014, as well as with Defence since 9 December 2018